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The Kicker — September 18, 2012 03:05 PM

Internet Archive launches TV news database

Could be a great resource for searching and watching news clips … while it lasts

By Sara Morrison

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Internet Archive, which hosts the Wayback Machine (very helpful to find now-dead websites or earlier versions of existing ones ... like CJR — looking good in 1996!), has just added a new collection to its Internet library: news clips.

Launched Monday, TV News Search and Borrow lets users search through over three years of painstakingly catalogued and transcribed clips from 20 networks (ABC to Univision). I tested it by searching for Fox News's coverage of the time when Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) was filmed at a town hall meeting talking on her cellphone while one of her constituents, a cancer survivor, spoke out against President Obama's healthcare law. You can imagine the field day Fox News pundits had with that one. And lo, there is it on TV News — clips from when it happened in August 2009 up until an April 2010 flashback, courtesy of Greta Van Susteren. Annoyingly, they're set to automatically play if you so much as hover your cursor over them, which means my office had to hear a lot of Fox News while I was researching this post.

It's a pretty cool resource, but I wonder how long TV News (which did not get back to me before deadline) will stay up before the networks whose clips it archived without getting permission will demand that their content be taken down. This *Wall Street Journal* article points out that Internet Archives doesn't have licenses for any of this content, though it has "reached out to all broadcast news departments to discuss potential partnerships." Other companies that have tried to create similar video search engines failed for this reason, as the article says — though those were for-profits, and Internet Archive is a nonprofit.

And, as *The New York Times* says, the Internet Archives could be protected under the fair use doctrine - the clips are short (no longer than 30 seconds) and for educational purposes rather than commercial. That said, if you want a DVD of the entire show from which the clip was taken, you can borrow a one for up to 30 days for a $50 "processing fee" (in some cases, the entire program can be viewed online for free).

It'll be interesting to see how this all shakes out over the coming weeks. For now, though, you might want to do all of your TV news clip searches as soon as possible — just in case.

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